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ABSTRACT

Severe problems in turnover and absenteeism among workers in geriatric and long-term care organizations have sparked great interest in the impact of job satisfaction on the quality of care provided to the elderly. The Job Description Index (JDI) is a job satisfaction index which measures satisfaction with several dimensions of the job: co-workers, pay, supervisors, promotions, and the work itself. Employees (N=423) of metropolitan area nursing homes and community services for the elderly completed the JDI. Results indicated that staff members were least satisfied with co-workers and pay, and most satisfied with supervisors, promotion opportunities, and the work itself. The dimension, greater satisfaction with work itself, was rated higher than the other four dimensions. Age was directly related to satisfaction with work, supervisors, and pay: marital status also significantly predicted these three areas. Gerontological training was related to increased satisfaction with both work and pay. The HDI appears to be a useful tool for all occupational and educational levels in long-term care and community organizations. (NRB)

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Predictors of Job Satisfaction Among Staff Working with the Aged*

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Running head: Job Satisfaction in Agencies for Aged

*Paper presented at the 33rd Annual Meeting of the Gerontological Society, San Diego, November 1980.

Job satisfaction has been studies widely in business and industry, both as a correlate and as a predictor of job performance and other outcome measures. While the relationship of job satisfaction to productivity or work performance is unclear (Lawler & Porter, 1967), job satisfaction has been found to correlate significantly with absenteeism and job turnover (Herzberg et al., 1957; Hulin, 1966; Stamps, 1978; Smith, 1974; Katzell & Yankelovich, 1975; Locke, 1976).

Recently there has been growing interest in geriatric and long-term-care organizations in the issue of job satisfaction and its impact on the quality of care provided to the elderly. Job satisfaction may be a useful diagnostic tool in settings which serve the elderly, where turnover is extremely high. Estimates of the present national turnover rate among nursing home staff range from 40% (Handschu, 1973) to 500% (Stannard, 1973). Schwartz (1974) reports that the cost of replacing and training a staff member is approximately four time the salary of the person involved. Frequent absenteeism and turnover result in enormous costs of time and dollars in such health and social service organizations (Blau, 1974).

The psychological costs of turnover and absenteeism are difficult to assess in economic terms, but are perhaps as high or higher than the financial losses incurred in rehiring and retraining. Increased tension and resentment among staff who must cover other's vacancies will most certainly affect their

job performance and consequently will reduce the quality of care received by elderly clients. An additional cost to the client is the break in continuity of care. In fact, Rosenblatt and Traviss (1966) concluded from their research among nursing home residents that a major area of dissatisfaction was lack of continuity in services. The instability in an environment where staff members change daily, either through absenteeism or turnover, may produce anxiety in the older person who must rely on a shifting array of personnel to meet his/her basic needs.

It therefore seems important to examine job satisfaction among staff of organizations serving the elderly. Through a better understanding of the relative satisfaction of diverse occupational groups and organizations, we may determine why some people who serve the aged remain on the job for many years and perform extremely well in these positions, while others move from one job to another and cause disruption in the lives of the elderly whom they serve.

One of the problems in assessing job satisfaction is determining the components of this concept. Several scales have been developed to measure global satisfaction (e.g. Brayfield & Rothe, 1951); others assess a single aspect such as supervisory or organizational satisfaction (e.g. Fleishman, 1969; King, 1960). Very few, however, concurrently measure several dimensions of the

job. The Job Description Index (JDI), is one such scale. It was developed by Smith, Kendall & Hulin (1969) as a quick, simple tool to administer to staff of all occupational and educational levels, and has been widely used in business and industry (e.g. Golembiewski & Yeager, 1978).

While the validity and reliability of the JDI have been demonstrated to be quite high (Hulin, 1966; Robinson, et al. 1969; Smith, 1974), and the dimensional structure seems stable across occupational groupings, a search of the job satisfaction literature yielding no studies in which the JDI was used in nursing homes or other settings where staff work with elderly clients or patients. The purpose of the present investigation was to examine the suitability of using the JDI as a diagnostic tool in community and long term care settings which serve the elderly. If the instrument appears to predict turnover, has high validity, reliability and a stable factor structure, it may be a useful employee assessment tool in organizations for the aged.

The present report is based on a larger study of antecedents, components and outcomes of attitudes toward the elderly (Kahana & Kiyak, 1979). It presents the results of a series of analyses to examine reliability and validity of the JDI in organizations serving the elderly. Job satisfaction in such settings has been proposed as a major determinent of attitudes toward the elderly.

METHOD

Subjects

All respondents were employees of nursing homes or community services for the elderly in two metropolitan areas. They had volunteered to complete a questionnaire describing "their perceptions of their jobs". Table 1 illustrates some demographic characteristics of the respondents. While the total sample size was 423, some analyses may have missing information. Briefly, the sample can be described as predominantly white (64.3%) women (87.8%) working in nursing homes (75.9%). A significant proportion of these respondents is between 26 and 50 years of age (46.5%), working between 21 and 40 hours per week (80.8%) on the day shift (66.4%). While nurse aides make up the largest group (41.1%), other occupational levels are also represented. Administrators and doctors make up 8.4%; those having direct physical contact with the elderly such as nurses and physical therapists 19.7%; those who do not have direct physical contact, but provide social services such as social workers, activity leaders and clerical workers 18.6% and finally maintenance workers 12.2%.

Insert Table 1 about here

Measures

The Job Description Index (JDI) was developed by Smith, Kendall & Hulin (1969) during a series of studies of job sat-

isfaction. It is a useful instrument because it is capable of being used over a wide range of job classifications and with people of varying job levels.

Job satisfaction is inferred from respondent's statement of satisfaction with five general areas: (1) satisfaction with the work itself, (2) satisfaction with pay, (3) satisfaction with opportunities for promotion, (4) satisfaction with supervision and (5) satisfaction with coworkers. Smith (1974) reports internal consistancy reliabilities for the five JDI scales ranging from .80 to .88, as determined by corrected split-half reliabilities. These tests were conducted on the responses of eighty male employees from two different electronic plants. The average correlation between scales is approximately .37; this indicates that each scale is measuring a different component of job satisfaction.

For each of these five areas, the respondent is presented with a list of adjectives or short phrases, then asked to indicate how well each word or phrase describes the area of the job in question. For example, if the adjective describes correctly a characteristic of the pay (e.g. income adequate on one's present job, the respondent is asked to write "Y" for "yes" beside it. If the adjective does not describe one's job, one writes "N" for "no" next to the words. The adjective list for each area contains a mix of positive and negative items, based on judgments of authors.

The assumption is made that all respondents will interpret the adjective the same way, (e.g. that a "challenging" job is desirable, etc.). A copy of the JDI scale and instructions used in this study is illustrated in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

RESULTS

Factor Analysis

A general PA2 varimax rotation factor analysis was run on all JDI items combined. After noting that the items clustered according to the a priori categories developed by Smith et al. (1969), internal consistencies of each conceptual scale were examined. Confirming factor analyses were then done within each cluster with those items that contributed to internal consistency. Final items were selected to compute each scale score by deleting those whose inclusion caused the overall alpha to drop appreciably.

Insert Table 3 about here

Table 3 illustrates the final factor loadings for each item as well as the internal consistency for each dimension. As an example, the first dimension of work includes only 8 of the 12 items from Smith et al. (1969) which were in the questionnaire.

Four of these items were omitted because they did not load highly on the factor, and did not contribute to the alpha coefficient. The alpha for this revised work satisfaction scale is .66, which represents the lowest internal reliability of all five dimensions. Satisfaction with coworkers produced the highest alpha, with a score of .825.

Factor loadings of individual items are positive because the direction of response was adjusted in the scoring procedure. Note that all factor loadings are quite high, ranging from a low of .761 for "fascinating" on the work dimension, to as high as .92 for two items on the pay dimension.

Scale Score Computation

Each of the five JDI dimensions were scored in a similar manner: positive (satisfied) answers were scored "1" while each negative response was given a score of "0". The overall score fore each dimension was obtained by dividing the total number of items the respondent answered into the number of positive responses. This procedure was used as respondents occasionally omitted answers to some adjectives. If there were more than two items per scale missing per respondent, that case was dropped from the analysis. Scores could thereby range from 0 (lowest satisfaction) to 1.0 (highest satisfaction). Table 4 shows that for the dimensions of (1) the work itself, (2) the supervisors and (3) promotion

opportunities, the mode is 1.0, or the highest possible score; conversely, for pay and the co-workers, the mode is 0. Great variation between the dimensions is found in their means. Consistent with modal scores, mean satisfaction is highest for the work itself (.82), supervisors (.79), and promotion (.68). It is lowest for pay (.35) and co-workers (.17).

Insert Table 4 about here

The patterns of data on this table clearly illustrates that staff of facilities serving the aged are least satisfied with co-workers and pay, and most satisfied with supervisors, promotions and the work itself. Only the dimension of work had a minimum response that was higher than 0, the lowest possible score, suggesting greater satisfaction with the work itself than with any of the other four areas.

Predictors of Job Satisfaction

Table 5 contains the significant background predictors of the five JDI components. Age is directly related to satisfaction with the three areas of work, supervisors and pay ($F=31.14$; $df = 1,234$; $p < .01$). That is, people over 50 are more satisfied in these three areas than those under 30.

Marital status also significantly predicts these same three areas, with the never married less satisfied with the work itself than either the married or divorced, separated or widowed ($F=10.77$; $df = 3,369$; $p < .01$).

Married people are more satisfied with the supervisors than the non-married ($F=3.61$; $df = 2,344$; $p < .05$). Finally, the divorced, widowed or separated are least satisfied with the pay the receive ($F=3.07$; $df = 2,293$; $p < .05$).

The final analysis of variance test on Table 5 illustrates that previous gerontological training is related to increased satisfaction with both the work itself ($F=18.40$; $df = 1,353$; $p < .01$), as well as with the pay ($F=4.09$; $df = 1,283$; $p < .01$). This suggests that training may provide realistic expectations, and hence higher satisfaction in these two areas. There were no demographic predictors of satisfaction with co-workers or promotion opportunities. Table 5 presents these results.

Insert Table 5 about here

Table 6 illustrates some organizational predictors of job satisfaction. There are differences in satisfaction with both the work and the pay among people holding various job titles ($F=3.16$; $df = 5,185$; $p < .01$). The means on Table 6 show a linear progression in work satisfaction by position prestige. Administrators are the most satisfied and volunteers the least. Job title also predicts satisfaction with the pay. Administrators and registered nurses are the most satisfied, followed by housekeeping, social workers and aides, respectively. Note that the means for work satisfaction are higher overall than those for pay. This suggests that while there is variance in pay satisfaction, overall it is less than that for work satisfaction.

Insert Table 6 about here

The second analysis of variance test on Table 6 deals with whether the majority of the work performed is patient-oriented (working directly with the elderly) or object-oriented (e.g. housekeeping, office or paper work, filling medicine trays). Work orientation was related to satisfaction with the work ($F=3.31$; $df = 2,185$; $p < .05$); those dealing more directly with patients were more satisfied than those whose work is more object-oriented.

Work shift was found to predict satisfaction with both supervisors and co-workers. However, it is surprising that there was no difference in work satisfaction because the work of nurses and aides varies considerably across shifts. Satisfaction with supervisors was greatest for those on the evening shift and least for those working afternoons ($F=5.12$; $df = 2,292$; $p < .01$). The patterns is different for attitudes toward co-workers. Those on afternoons are most satisfied while the evening shift is least content ($F=4.82$; $df = 2.284$; $p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

There is a serious dearth of valid and reliable tools with which to assess job satisfaction and performance among staff of organizations serving the aged. This despite the fact that it is important to understand employee attitudes if the severe problems of turnover and absenteeism are to be resolved in these settings. The loss due to such turnover can be calculated not only in economic terms, but in the quality of care provided to elderly clients.

The results presented above suggest that the JDI may be a first step in improving personnel assessment in settings for the elderly. We have demonstrated it to be a useful tool for all occupational and educational levels, in long term care as well as community organizations. The finding of a similar factor structure to that of the original scale permits comparisons with norms for other occupational groups. One of the problems in gerontological research is the development of measures specifically geared to this population, which limits comparisons with other populations.

The factor structure of the JDI permits a diagnosis of diverse characteristics of a job. That is, if a nurse aide performs poorly and has a high absenteeism rate, one may administer the JDI and determine what aspects of the job are causing such behavior. Without a clear understanding of the unspecific job dimension effecting dissatisfaction, administrators cannot help their employees change poor work attitudes and performance.

Our findings suggest that gerontological training improves job satisfaction. Organizations which offer frequent workshops on different aspects on aging, educational sensitivity, and training programs to improve attitudes are indirectly improving job satisfaction and quality of care. Furthermore, if the JDI mean scores of employees in one nursing home are lower than in another, it would appears that the former is not fostering a favorable attitude climate toward the elderly. We found no difference between community and long term care organizations on any dimensions of job satisfaction, in contrast to the work of Blau (1974) and Montgomery (1978).

Our research into job satisfaction, attitudes and work performance has only recently been completed. It is anticipated that future reports will further clarify the relationship among these important components of organizations serving the elderly.

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TABLE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

(N=423)

	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER
SEX		
Male	12.2%	48
Female	87.8	346
AGE		
20 and Under	24.8	101
21 - 50	46.5	190
Over 50	28.7	117
RACE		
Black	26.4	107
White	64.3	261
Oriental/Asian	4.9	20
Other	4.4	18
AGENCY TYPE		
Nursing Home	75.9	321
Community Services	24.1	102
TITLE		
Administration/Doctors	8.4	31
Nursing/Physical Therapy	19.7	73
Social Workers/Activities/Clerical	18.6	69
Aides	41.1	152
Housekeeping/Janitorial	12.2	45
HOURS WORKED PER WEEK		
20 or less	9.7	39
21 - 40	80.8	324
Over 40	9.5	38
WORKSHIFT		
Day (Includes all community services staff)	66.4	202
Afternoon	30.6	93
Night	3.0	9

TABLE 2

Job Description Index (Smith, Kendall and Hulin, 1965)

For each of the items below, place a "Y" (Yes) next to the item if it describes your feelings about your job. Place an "N" (No) next to the item if it does not describe your job. Try not to leave any items blank.

Work

___ Fascinating
___ Routine
___ Satisfying
___ Boring
___ Good
___ Creative
___ Respected
___ Pleasant
___ Useful
___ Tiresome
___ Healthful
___ Challenging
___ On your feet
___ Frustrating
___ Simple
___ Endless
___ Gives sense of accomplishment

Supervisors

___ Ask my advice
___ Hard to please
___ Impolite
___ Praise good work
___ Tactful
___ Up-to-date
___ Don't supervise enough
___ Quick-tempered
___ Tell me where I stand
___ Stubborn
___ Know job well
___ Bad
___ Intelligent
___ Leave me on my own
___ Around when needed
___ Lazy
___ Too much supervision

Other Workers

___ Stimulating
___ Boring
___ Slow
___ Ambitious
___ Stupid
___ Responsible
___ Fast
___ Intelligent
___ Talk too much
___ Lazy
___ Unpleasant
___ Active
___ Narrow interests
___ Conscious of rank
___ Friendly
___ Easy to work with

Pay

___ Income adequate for normal expenses
___ Satisfactory
___ Barely live on income
___ Bad
___ Income provides luxuries
___ Insecure
___ Less than I deserve
___ Highly paid
___ Underpaid

Promotions

___ Opportunity somewhat limited
___ Promotion on ability
___ Dead-end job
___ Good chance for promotion
___ Unfair promotion policy
___ Infrequent promotions

TABLE 3

Factor Analysis of Job Description Index

FACTOR NAME	VARIABLES	FACTOR LOADING	ALPHA
SATISFACTION WITH WORK	WORK IS:		
	1. Fascinating	.761	
	2. Satisfying	.856	
	3. Boring	.769	.66
	4. Creative	.785	
	5. Respected	.865	
	6. Pleasant	.788	
	7. Useful	.802	
	8. Challenging	.868	
	9. On your feet		
	10. Frustrating		
	11. Simple		
	12. Endless		
SATISFACTION WITH SUPERVISOR	SUPERVISORS:		
	1. Ask my advice	.824	
	2. Hard to please	.909	
	3. Praise good work	.868	.72
	4. Quick-tempered	.889	
	5. Leave me on my own	.805	
	6. Around when needed	.807	
	7. Too much supervision	.899	
	8. Know job well		
	9. Don't supervise enough		
	10. Intelligent		
	11. Lazy		
SATISFACTION WITH CO-WORKERS	OTHER WORKERS:		
	1. Work slow	.832	
	2. Ambitious	.804	
	3. Responsible	.912	.825
	4. Intelligent	.872	
	5. Talk too much	.836	
	6. Lazy	.873	
	7. Unpleasant	.891	
	8. Friendly	.846	
	9. Easy to work with	.774	
	10. Conscious of rank		

cont'd

TABLE 3 (CONT'D)

FACTOR NAME	VARIABLES	FACTOR LOADING	ALPHA
SATISFACTION WITH PAY	PAY:		
	1. Income adequate	.811	
	2. Satisfactory	.803	
	3. Barely live on income	.863	.77
	4. Income provides luxuries	.921	
	5. Less than I deserve	.853	
	6. Highly paid	.921	
SATISFACTION WITH PROMOTIONS	PROMOTIONS:		
	1. Opportunity somewhat limited	.779	
	2. Promotion on ability	.887	.75
	3. Dead-end job	.868	
	4. Good chance for promotion	.889	
	5. Unfair promotion policies		
	6. Infrequent promotions		

TABLE 4

DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON JDI COMPONENTS

JDI DIMENSIONS:	Work[a]	Supervisors[a]	Co-Workers[a]	Pay[a]	Promotion[a]
Minimum	.22	0	0	0	0
Maximum	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Mode	1.0	1.0	0	0	1.0
Median	.89	.86	.11	.33	.77
Mean	.82	.79	.17	.35	.68
Standard Deviation	.19	.24	.24	.30	.34
Valid Cases	378	357	350	304	281
Missing Cases	45	66	73	119	142

[a]0 = lowest possible satisfaction
1.0 = highest possible satisfaction

TABLE 5

BACKGROUND PREDICTORS OF JOB SATISFACTION

JDI DIMENSION:	Work[a]	Supervisors[a]	Co-Workers[a]	Pay[a]	Promotion[a]
PREDICTORS					
Age:	F=31.14**	17.30**	N.S.	10.10**	N.S.
Under 30	.76	.74		.33	
Over 50	.89	.88		.47	
Marital Status:	F=10.77**	3.61*	N.S.	3.07*	N.S.
Married	.85	.83		.38	
Divorced, Separated or Widowed	.83	.79		.28	
Never Married	.75	.75		.39	
Gerontological Training:	F=18.40**	N.S.	N.S.	4.09*	N.S.
Yes	.86			.39	
No	.78			.32	

[a] Mean Scores
larger numbers denote greater job satisfaction

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

TABLE 6

ORGANIZATIONAL PREDICTORS OF JOB SATISFACTION

JDI DIMENSION:	Work[a]	Supervisors[a]	Co-Workers[a]	Pay[a]	Promotion[a]
PREDICTORS:					
JOB TITLE	F=3.16**	N.S.	N.S.	4.92	N.S.
Administration/ Supervisor	.89			.52	
Social Worker	.84			.24	
RN	.83			.52	
Aide	.78			.22	
Housekeeping	.74			.37	
Volunteer	.52			NA	
TYPE OF WORK	F=3.31*	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Patient-oriented	.83				
Object-oriented	.74				
WORK SHIFT	N.S.	5.12**	4.82**	N.S.	N.S.
Day		.81	.17		
Afternoon		.73	.22		
Evening		.86	.07		

[a] 0=lowest possible satisfaction (mean scores)
1.0=highest possible satisfaction

* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .01$